



Independent
Commission for
Reconciliation and
Information Recovery
Complaints handling policy

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| 1.1 | | 31 July 2025 | Chief of Staff |
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR) is committed to delivering a high-quality service to Requesting Individuals and others we interact with.
- 1.2 We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services. If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us.
- 1.3 This policy describes the ways in which you can make a complaint. It also tells you about how we will handle your complaint and what you can expect from us.
- 1.4 The ICRIR complaint handling policy was developed in line with the Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman Complaints Standards and is designed to support delivery of the values we set out in our Code of Conduct.

2. What is a complaint?

- 2.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public that requires a response. It can be, either spoken or written and can be about:
 - an act, omission or decision we have made;
 - the standard of service we have provided or which has been provided on our behalf.
- 2.2 It may be helpful to have regard to our [Operational Design Framework](#) which sets out what requesting Individuals can expect from the Commission, from initial conduct through to the publication of a findings report. It provides openness about the standards we have set ourselves, and to which we can be held to account by those using the Commission.

3. Who can make a complaint?

- 3.1 You can make a complaint to us if you have or are engaged with the Commission in the course of its work. You may also complain to us if you are not directly engaged with the Commission but are affected or likely to be affected by any action, inaction or decision by us.
- 3.2 If you do not wish to deal with the complaint yourself, you can appoint a representative to raise the complaint on your behalf. There is no restriction on who may represent you. You will however need to provide us with your consent in writing for the representative to raise and discuss the complaint with us and to

access your personal information (A Representative Authorisation Form is provided at Appendix A)

- 3.3 You can also make a complaint on behalf of an effected person who has died, is a child or is otherwise unable to complain because of physical or mental incapacity. There is no restriction on who may act as a representative but there may be restrictions on the type of information we can share with you. We will explain this when we first look at the complaint.
- 3.4 If at any time we consider that you, as a representative are not acting in the best interests of the individual effected, we will assess whether we should stop our consideration of the complaint. If we do this, we will share our reasons with you in writing. In such circumstances, we will tell you that you can ask for a review of the decision if you are unhappy with our decision.

4. What can I complain about?

4.1 You can complain about things like:

- Inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service;
- Dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on you;
- Failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services
- Failure to follow the appropriate administrative process;
- Conduct, treatment by or attitude of a member of staff or contractor;
- Dissatisfaction with how an element of a decision was administered;
- Disagreement with a decision, except where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed – see “What can’t I complain about?”

5. What can’t I complain about?

5.1 There are some things we can’t deal with through our Complaints Handling Policy. Examples include:

- Issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal (if you decide to take legal action, you should let us know as the complaint cannot then be considered under this process);
- Disagreement with a decision where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision or an established appeals process;
- A request for information under the Data Protection or Freedom of Information legislation or a concern about a breach of data security under the Data Protection legislation. If internal ICRIR review processes are exhausted unresolved concerns can be raised with the [Information Commissioner’s Office](#)

- A concern relating to appointments or removals, pay, discipline, superannuation or other personnel matters in relation to public sector employment.
- A concern that should be dealt with in line with ICRIR's 'Raising a Concern' Policy;
- An attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision;
- Abuse or unsubstantiated allegations about our organisation or staff where such actions would be covered by our Unacceptable Actions Policy;
- A concern about the actions or service of a different organisation, where we have no involvement in the issue (except where the other organisation is delivering services on our behalf);
- the exercise of significant policing powers by ICRIR officers in the course of specific investigations (these are subject to separate, external oversight arrangements, in line with standard practice for policing powers and any complaint should be raised through the [Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland](#) or the [Independent Office for Police Conduct](#));
- decisions made by the Commission in relation to the handling and treatment of specific cases, which will be considered as part of the published operational policies for conduct of ICRIR investigations. These should be raised with the case support lead for separate handling as part of the live case; [Review of Decisions Policy](#) or
- legislation and our role as set by Parliament.

5.2 If we consider that your complaint (or any part of it) does not fall under this procedure, we will explain the reasons for this. We will do this in writing to you and provide any relevant explanation and signposting information.

6. How do I complain?

6.1 Complaints can be made to us:

- by email at complaints@icrir.independent-inquiry.uk;
- in writing at The Vantage, 32-36 Great Victoria Street, Belfast, BT2 7BA; or
- in person, by making an appointment using the contact details provided above.

6.2 It is easier for us to address complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the service concerned. So if you feel it is appropriate, please talk informally to a member of our staff in the service you are considering complaining about as early as possible. They can then try and resolve the matter.

6.3 When making a complaint, you do not have to specifically use the word complaint, although doing so can be helpful to us. When complaining, please tell us:

- Your full name and contact details;
- As much as you can about the complaint and how this is impacting you
- What has gone wrong
- The outcome you are seeking.

6.4 We will make sure that the ongoing engagement of anyone making a complaint with the Commission will not be affected because they have made a complaint.

7. How long do I have to make a complaint?

7.1 Complaints should be made to us as soon as possible after the events complained about. This should be no later than 3 months after the date the matter being complained about happened or the date the individual raising the complaint found out about it, whichever is the later date.

7.2 If a complaint is made to us after that 3-month deadline, we may still consider it if:

- we believe there were good reasons for not making the complaint before the deadline, and
- we consider that it is still possible to properly consider the complaint.

8. What happens when I have complained?

8.1 Our complaints procedure has two stages. Stage 1 is for minor operational complaints which do not require significant investigation and are best dealt with quickly within the team involved. Stage 2 is for more serious complaints which are likely to involve significant investigation and / or which cross over teams and for escalation of complaints which it has not been possible to resolve in Stage 1.

Stage 1: Business Area response

8.2 We aim to respond to all complaints quickly (where possible, when you first tell us about the issue). For complaints that fall under Stage 1, this could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, or immediate action to resolve the problem.

8.3 We will aim to resolve your complaint at Stage 1 in fifteen working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

8.4 If you are not satisfied with the response we give at this stage, you have the right to request the escalation of your complaint to Stage 2. We will contact you

regarding this request. You must normally ask us to consider your complaint at Stage 2 within twelve months of the event you want to complain about or finding out that you have a reason to complain.

Stage 2: Investigation

8.3 Stage 2 deals with two types of complaints:

- Where the customer remains dissatisfied after Stage 1, and
- Those that clearly require investigation, and so are handled directly at this stage

8.4 When using Stage 2:

- We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days;
- We will try to resolve your complaint where we can (in some cases we may suggest using an alternative complaint resolution approach, such as mediation);
- Where we cannot resolve your complaint, we will give you a full response as soon as possible, normally within 12 weeks; and
- If our investigation will take longer than 12 weeks, we will tell you our revised time limits and keep you updated on progress.

9. Getting help to make your complaint

9.1 You can also find out about advisers and advocates who may be able to assist you in making your complaint through the Citizens Advice Website www.citizensadvice.org.uk

10. Confidentiality of complaints

- 10.1. We will maintain confidentiality and protect your privacy throughout the complaints process in accordance with UK General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018. We will only collect and disclose information to those colleagues who are involved in the consideration of the complaint.
- 10.2. Complaint outcomes may be anonymised and shared within our organisation to promote service improvement.

11. Unreasonable, abusive and vexatious behaviour

11.1 Whilst the ICRIR is committed to our Trauma and Resilience Informed Model and aims to respond to all complaints efficiently and fairly, we reserve the right to apply our Policy on unreasonable, abusive and vexatious behaviour and complaints under the circumstances set out in that Policy [Unreasonable and Vexatious Behaviour Policy](#).

Appendix A – Representative authorisation form

Please complete this form if you want to authorise another person to act on your behalf. You could ask a friend, relative, elected representative or another service provider but check first whether they will charge you for this. You can change or cancel this authority at any time by emailing us at complaints@icrir.independent-inquiry.uk

About you:

Title:

First name:

Last name:

Address:

Your email address:

Your telephone number:

I authorise:

Representative Title:

First name:

Last name:

Address:

Email address:

Telephone number:

To act on my behalf in relation to my complaint about:

I understand that any information given to my representative will be deemed to have been given to me.

Signature: